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How to Help Employees Tell Their Stories and Create a Personal Brand

Identifying and marketing a personal brand is helpful to establish the groundwork for a successful and fulfilling career. One career management firm president lays out the “three Ps” for learning leaders to help employees build an effective framework for establishing a personal brand and marketing oneself.

by Rita Balian Allen September 21, 2018



When employees know their value and are able to communicate it, their career development can excel. Talent management and learning professionals can provide resources for talent in organizations to embrace this mindset and empower employees to take charge of their careers in a manner that enables success. CLOs can help empower employees by helping them find what

they have to offer, what they want and how to ask for it, and in turn, they can help employees identify and market their personal brand.

A person's ability to market their talents, accomplishments and value within an organization and externally is a key part of enhancing their brand. To excel, we must understand how to set ourselves apart. Leaders and managers should be inspiring and helping team members tell their stories. Ask your employees to answer the following questions:

- *What is your value add – your unique differentiator(s)?*
- *Can you define your personal brand?*
- *How easily can you articulate that brand?*
- *Are you an effective storyteller to share your accomplishments?*
- *Is your personal brand reflected in your storytelling?*
- *Do you actively work on enhancing your brand?*

If they answered no to at least two of these questions, it's time to reassess their own self exploration and commit time to reflecting deeper on the answers. When we use the term "marketing," people think of products and services. What about ourselves? We must market our talents, accomplishments and value inside our organizations and outside within our industry and community. It is important to get comfortable talking about ourselves in this way. Do we know our story and are we prepared to share it with passion and purpose?

The first step to develop this ease, confidence and comfort is to change our mindset and embrace it as a natural process that requires us to uncover our authentic best self and continue to build upon that as a strong foundation. When we do this, we are so genuine that it becomes effortless; we do not even realize we are doing so. In fact, it is about how we put ourselves out there and how we are of service. Most importantly, we first must understand the value we bring when we are at our best and what is the differentiator that engages our best selves. Our ability to communicate through storytelling is the most effective and genuine way to showcase accomplishments because it taps into our passion and purpose.

Are we *prepared* to talk about ourselves in this way — *packaging* our talents and accomplishments — showcasing them and *presenting* our value internally within our organizations and externally within our fields and communities?

The Three Ps Marketing Technique:

1. **Preparation** — conducting your due diligence; *define and identify your brand.*
2. **Packaging** — creating your portfolio; *create and build your brand.*
3. **Presentation** — delivering your message; *articulate and enhance your brand.*

Preparation

- Know yourself and your value — conduct extensive self-assessment and exploration of skills, competencies, accomplishments, strengths, limitations, interests, values, motivations and aspirations.

- Feedback — solicit honest input from colleagues, managers, team members, vendors, clients, other stakeholders, as well as friends and family. Be open to hearing others' insights on your strengths and development areas.
- Differentiating factors — upon your own assessment and feedback from others, begin to identify your unique characteristics, traits and/or experiences.
- Network — build, maintain and nurture long lasting relationships. Deliberately and strategically establish a network that includes mutually rewarding relationships with contacts from a variety of areas, internally and externally.
- Goals — know what you want and have a vision for your career, determine your mission, set goals (short and long term), have a plan in order to create a road map to achieve that vision.
- Positive attitude — positivity, optimism and a sense of humor are important in setting a strong foundation. There will be peaks and valleys; stay positive and be happy.

Packaging

- Maintain résumé and bio/CV regularly — keep these documents updated on a continuous basis; capture all achievements as they occur.
- Keep copies of performance reviews, awards, articles and presentations. These are part of your portfolio, not to be taken for granted.
- Create history of your track record — a running list of talents, projects and achievements.
- Obtain references, quotes and testimonials — these endorsements will be valuable in your storytelling and in advancing your aspirations.
- Create your virtual presence — be selective of the venues you use and display thought leadership.
- Serve on committees and boards — professionally and personally giving back is rewarding, it builds new skills and it enhances credibility
- Content expertise — establish specific niches, functional and/or technical expertise. Be a sought-out subject matter expert.
- Expand your network and enhance your visibility — continue to strategically build long lasting mutually rewarding relationships; give back to others and follow up.
- Be well-read and stay current in your field — stay updated on trends, best practices and key initiatives. Write blogs, speak on panels and share knowledge; continue to enhance education and be a lifelong learner.
- Create key alliances and partnerships — align with people you admire and respect. Have and be a mentor, trusted adviser, champion, advocate and sponsor.

Presentation

- Craft and articulate a clear and concise message — create your personal brand statement that captures your true best self; keep it short, simple and be authentic.
- Strong communication, active listening and interpersonal skills are essential — be a good listener and read other people so you can genuinely connect.
- Be assertive — clearly articulate your desires, value add, “brand” when the opportunity presents itself and be an effective storyteller.

- Practice your delivery again and again ... *and* again — telling stories is a more authentic way of delivering your message but it takes practice.
- Maintain a give-and-take approach — practice professional etiquette, be sure that you are giving more than getting, thank people who help you, initiate contact and follow up.
- Be proactive and strategic with your efforts to be visible — think big picture.
- Be your own advocate and know when to reach out to key contacts for support.
- Never burn any bridges — always leave positive impressions.
- Deliver it with the utmost confidence — confidence is how it all comes together.

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